

The University of Chicago

THE CLIMAX OF RUDYARD KIPLING'S FAME

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF
THE HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

1938

By

WILLIAM B. SCHNEIDER

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The Political Background

The crowning years of Rudyard Kipling's career, when his fame mounted highest, and the voices of detraction were heard almost not at all, began in the middle of the year 1897, the year of Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, and ran to December, 1899, when the South African War was almost two months old. Theretofore Kipling had been a very successful writer, receiving high rates per thousand words, and salting his works with Imperialistic suggestion that grew more unmistakable with the years. Now he became a national figure, a spokesman for England and the Empire, whose portrait was published with that of the Queen, and whose private griefs were consoled by messages of sympathy from no less a personage than the Emperor of Germany himself. He became "almost a god in England." "His fame was a church," said Richard le Gallienne, writing in that time, and writing with an anti-Kipling bias.¹ It was not a reputation that Kipling in these years represented to England: it was an obsession, so deep that the critics had despaired of finding its source; so deep that successful imitation by other writers signally failed.² This apotheosis in the last years of the century is susceptible of at least some explanation, if Kipling's genius is not. It was due mainly to three forces in conjunction: the state of the public mind at the time; the aptness of Kipling's literary activity; and the accident of his serious, almost fatal, illness when he was already at the crest of a wave of almost hysterical national idolatry. The analysis of these three forces is the task of this chapter.

Much confusion still exists regarding the exact interpretation to be given to the sum total of the literary, political, social, and other phenomena of the last ten years of the nineteenth century. More than anything else, the prominence given to

¹Rudyard Kipling. A Criticism (London: John Lane, 1900), p. 2.

²G. K. Smalley, "English Men of Letters. Personal Appreciations and Recollections," McClure's, XX (January, 1903), 296.

the "decadence" of the period has obscured certain other tendencies. Refinement and subtlety in art, eccentricity and perverseness in conduct, and the dawn of a realistic, active social consciousness were, to be sure, obvious characteristics of the time, but they were by no means all of the picture. Older than the decadence, older than the Fabian Society, and more widespread among the people, whether for good or for evil, there were other forces and tendencies, and to these the exaltation of Kipling owes a special debt.

It must first be recalled that the eighteen-nineties stand at the hither end of three centuries of almost unrelenting imperialistic propaganda and unrelenting imperialistic conquest, and that in the last half-century, through Tennyson in poetry, through Carlyle in philosophy, through Disraeli in politics, and through numerous organizations in commerce, the idea of Imperialism had been intensely indoctrinated into Englishmen. "War was a romance and the expansion of Empire a duty."¹ The literary men who sponsored the idea were the great ones of the land, so that their opinions carried weight. The more practical exponents, whose support of Imperialism took the form of actual extension of political and commercial power, were as successful as the literary apologists were popular: Disraeli secured control of the Suez Canal, made Victoria Empress of India, and paved the way for the Golden Jubilee of 1887; and the various trade associations, with the help of government, expanded English business until prosperity was a very real quantity as far down the social scale as opinion could matter. Englishmen of the nineties were the heirs, on the one hand, of a tradition, as old as Agincourt, that England won her battles when she went abroad to fight, and on the other hand, of an Empire such as had never before been gathered under one flag. In recent years they had been made sharply conscious of both these facts by calculated propaganda, and stood ready, as events showed, to acclaim whoever should pleasingly sing the song of empire.

Disraeli died in 1881. The most influential surviving statesman, Gladstone, was no Imperialist. Under his ministry, England accepted military and diplomatic defeat in the first Boer War, when General Colley was beaten at Majuba Hill in 1881, and

¹Sir Ian Hamilton, quoted in Rebecca West, "Rudyard Kipling," The New Statesman and Nation, XI (January 25, 1936), 112.

England acknowledged the independence of the Transvaal Boers, reserving, however, what later became the significant "suzerainty" that served to excuse the South African War of 1899-1902. Gladstone further offended the Imperialists and the conservatives by his insistence on pushing home rule for Ireland, a move to divide rather than to unify the power of the central government. Joseph Chamberlain, who was presently to be the greatest single political force for Imperialism, had, until 1886, been allied with Gladstone as a Liberal. After 1886, when the first Home Rule Bill had caused a rift in the Liberal Party, Chamberlain, the chief secessionist, began to move through the stages of Liberal Unionism which were eventually to lead him, maneuvering for power, into alliance with the Conservatives, under the name of the Unionist Party. Gladstone had a last season of power, 1892-1895. In 1895 the Conservatives or Unionists triumphed, and Chamberlain became colonial secretary, the most important man in the cabinet, with opportunity and power to implement his twin projects of protective tariff and Imperial Federation in a highly propitious climate. England was now to hear Imperialism seriously proposed as an active policy, by a political party powerful enough to remain in office continuously, except for the years 1892-1895, from 1886 to 1906. Salisbury, the Prime Minister, was sixty-five years old in 1895, and not in good health, so that he left the guidance of affairs thenceforward largely in the hands of his cabinet colleagues. With the Jameson Raid, and Khartoum, and Fashoda, and the Jubilees centering public attention on colonial affairs, the colonial office quickly became the paramount government department, and Joseph Chamberlain the man most attentively watched by England and the world. In a short time it became apparent to all that Chamberlain was wasting no time about setting in motion the machinery of practical Imperialism, sentiment for which had been officially discouraged under Gladstone after 1881, and particularly in the three years from 1892 to 1896. "Imperialism" was top dog: Mr. Chamberlain's 'Learn to think Imperially' rang throughout the country, and we remember it was even suggested that the saying should be put on the walls of every school."¹ Thus it happened that the return of Kipling to England from America in 1896 coincided in a highly significant manner with the accession to power of a man and an idea most calculated to advance the views that Kipling was coming to represent.

¹Saturday Review, CXXIII (April 14, 1917), 331.

How long the idea of aggressive Imperialism would have lived disembodied, abstracted from concrete relationship to affairs of public interest, can only be guessed. Such relationships to affairs were not wanting. Earlier, Disraeli had made occasions, when destiny did not, for the nation to remember its Imperial character, and Chamberlain did the same. In 1896 Kitchener was dispatched to Khartoum to avenge Gordon, and incidentally to add the Soudan to the Empire in a strikingly public manner, an errand which he accomplished with thoroughness in 1898, so that Wilfrid Scawen Blunt was moved to comment on the "heavy butcher's bill" that had been ordered--"10,000 counted corpses."¹ Meanwhile public attention had been dramatically called to the Jameson Raid, which occurred in the last days of 1895 and the first few of 1896. Today Chamberlain seems to be absolved from complicity in the Raid, and even in his own time such an opponent as Leonard Courtney declared from the hustings that he completely discredited and trampled upon suggestions that the colonial secretary had been a party to the plot.² There were, however, strong and openly avowed suspicions at the time that government had had a hand in the affair with Rhodes and Jameson, and the effect was the same as if the suspicions had been well founded: little-Englanders preferred to believe the worst of the "jingoese," and the jingoese themselves did not mind at all so long as English influence abroad was advanced by the occasion. Alfred Austin, newly appointed Laureate, fervently praised the Raid in the Times, and thus gave away the government as being at least not greatly put out. Excitement in London ran high, and when the Raiders were brought to trial, they were received as public heroes.

It is not often that we find such sharp departures in history, but if England had only known it, she was hearing, when she heard the news of the Jameson Raid, of the end of her peace. Since that event, the world has known no rest. It was the first sudden symptom of a deep disorder. If English politics before 1896 can be compared with English politics since 1896, it will be seen that a change in the character of public questions took place about that year. Before 1896 politics were concerned very largely with man as an Anglican or Baptist, with man as a teetotaler or not a teetotaler, with man as a single or peradventure a plural voter. Theology entered very

¹My Diaries. Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1889-1914, Part I (1888-1900) (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932), p. 296.

²London Times, October 13, 1899, p. 6.

largely into politics. Large masses of people voted one way or the other according as they were or were not of a Puritan strain.

. . . . The two armies of Liberal and Conservative, the Montagues and the Capulets of Church and Dissent, had very little idea what a large mass of the population it was that took little or no interest in their contentions, and very much preferred the racecourse. The Jameson Raid was the signal for these people to join in. The game of African Imperialism had begun, and it was a game which everybody could understand. It was felt that this was going to be as good as hunting. 'More and more,' wrote Mr. C. P. Scott (editor of the Manchester Guardian) to Leonard Courtney, 'more and more one feels that foreign policy is the touchstone of all policy.'¹

The Raid was not a noble gesture--so much is clear from the anxiety of men in office not to be implicated in it. Yet it was popular in England, and revealed the Imperialist temper of the nation. It brought attention to a focus on South Africa, on colonies, on Imperialism, Chamberlain, and Kipling, and hastened both the Boer War and the World War. It helped to make foreign policy "the touchstone of all policy" for a new attentive England.

The next occasion that bred Imperialist sentiment was the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, officially consummated June 20, 1897. The celebration was elaborately arranged; it was heightened by, and in turn helped to heighten, interest in the South African question and the Raid. The natural sentiments of loyalty and reverence that Victoria would have enjoyed on the occasion of an anniversary were deepened by the great length of her rule, by the not yet familiar "Empress of India" aspect of her sovereignty, and most of all by the recently enlivened consciousness of Imperial power that was in the air. The Jubilee brought the colors of the world to London, and the parades, pageants, and publicity filled the vulgar eyes.

Chamberlain, however, was not only popularizing the empire idea among the masses by means of the Jubilee splendor and pomp; he was also making the Jubilee an occasion for the imperialistic gathering of premiers from the colonies to consider the question of promoting his dream in a practical way. At that conference he spoke, striking the note of manifest destiny and moral Imperialism in a manner to echo almost precisely the words of Kipling, written before 1890. Kipling had said, while touring the world on his way

¹William Haslam Mills, *The Manchester Guardian. A Century of History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1922), pp. 130-33.

home from India, that he hoped for a colonial empire-building process,

. . . . ending in one great iron band encircling the earth. Within that limit, Free Trade. Without, rancorous Protection. It would be too vast a hornet's nest for any combination of Powers to disturb. The dream will not come about for a long time,¹ but we shall accomplish something like it one of these days.

Chamberlain's words to the assembled premiers were of the same tenor:

I for one have no doubt that this great Empire of ours, powerful as it is, is nothing to what it will become in the course of ages, when it will be in permanence a guarantee for the peace and civilization of the world.²

At an earlier time, soon after his installation as colonial secretary, he had said,

I believe that the British race is the greatest of governing races that the world has ever seen I say that he, indeed, is a craven and poor-spirited creature who despairs of the future of the British race.³

In those two passages is summed up the Kipling Imperialism--belief in the sacred mission of England to govern the world; faith that her destiny is to become that governor; and belief that English character is such as to give it a peculiar fitness for the task, to guarantee government for the good of the governed. There is abundant evidence that many people in England sincerely believed in the disinterested nature of Imperialism, even the aggressive sort that was now being talked of; indeed, such a belief was the sole condition that made the policy tenable for the thousands of normally pious citizens who were accustomed to reconcile social practices and conventions with Wesleyan theology and morals. In the flush of emotionalism that went with the Jubilee, the implication that God watched over and fostered England's Imperialism was both readily made and readily accepted. "The Recessional" owed its fame largely to this fact; to this fact also it was due that there could exist in England, along with large numbers of obvious jingoes, large numbers of folk who detested jingoism in all its blatant forms, yet devoutly confessed a creed of aggressive Imperialism. Such a one, for example, was W. T. Stead, the pious and humanitarian editor of the Review of Reviews.

¹From Sea to Sea, I, 227.

²J. L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain (London: Macmillan Co., 1934), III, 186.

³Ibid., p. 27.

Quite apart from its bearing on the Jubilee, the Wesleyanism just mentioned, or Dissent in general, was important in determining the state of the national mind in the nineties. Essentially it was the old Puritanism, and under that name it experienced a revival toward the end of the century, a revival which, if highly conscious, like so many of the intellectual phenomena of the decade, and externally generated, was yet highly vocal. The principal reason for it was the approach of the Cromwell Tercentenary of 1899, but there were probably other reasons also, such as the ingrained protestantism of the middle and lower classes; the growth of the "chosen people" and "manifest destiny" themes in Imperialism, and even the Old Testament tone of "The Recessional" itself. To the existence of the reawakened Puritanism many witnesses testified, often in a manner directly linking it with Imperialism. The Saturday Review, in June, 1899, marvelled at "the latent Puritanism with which this century is closing so surprisingly in England."¹ The Scottish Review called Imperialism a compound of realism and mysticism, "like Cromwell, whose worship it served in such a remarkable manner to revive,"² and gave thanks for the strain of Wesleyanism in Kipling's blood. Edward Dowden likewise ascribed Kipling's power to the people's liking for his "old prophetic strain"; though he strummed only a banjo, "it seems as if a Puritan of the old Ironsides breed were the minstrel. Cromwell, after the victory of Dunbar, addressed the Speaker in words which go to the same manly tune."³ More strongly still spoke the Spectator, after "The Recessional," in July, 1897:

Mr. Kipling's new verses speak almost solely to the religious sentiment of the nation. If that sentiment did not exist, and exist passionately--i. e., as a living, moving thing, his poem would be passed by as simply incomprehensible He realized that if the nation's heart was to be moved to the full, it could only be on the religious side;--we keep at least this much of the old Puritan spirit. Burnt into Mr. Kipling's spirit is a touch of that Puritanism which has inspired our empire-builders so largely. With us, indeed, the greatest and most zealous patriotism has in it always a strain of Puritanism we are still God's Englishmen. We are not Carthage, and shall not become as Carthage while we keep this

¹LXXXVII (June 24, 1899), 777.

²Living Age, CCXXV (June 9, 1900), 801.

³"The Poetry of Mr. Kipling," Critic, XXXVIII (March, 1901), 220.

precious gift of seriousness--this religious fire--a fire which, since it was lighted for us by the Puritans, has never died out

Criticism of literature often still fell back on religious standards for measuring works of art: Lionel Johnson, attacking in the early nineties the flippant letters of his day, blamed them for ignoring the ten commandments; Stead blamed Swinburne for blasphemy, and praised Kipling for bowing prone before the "Infinite Drill Sergeant overhead";² and Buchanan, proceeding against Kipling in December, 1899, used as his chief criterion the religious-moral one.

The Cromwell Tercentenary itself generated considerable literary production and public enthusiasm. Carlyle was but lately dead, his name was on many lips, and his praise of Cromwell helped to foster Cromwell worship. There were many books, articles, and speeches on Cromwell, and there was a new statue of the Protector, erected, after some debate, in which the Times vigorously participated on Cromwell's side, on parliamentary soil, and unveiled after a speech by Lord Rosebery, who had outgrown his Gladstonianism and was by 1899 an active supporter of Government. He described Cromwell as

. . . . a practical mystic, the most formidable and terrible of all combinations. A man who combines inspiration apparently derived--in my judgment really derived--from close communion with the supernatural and the celestial, a man who has that inspiration and adds to it the energy of a mighty man of action, such a man as that lives in a communion on a Sinai of his own, and when he pleases to come down to this world below seems armed with no less than the terrors and decrees of the Almighty himself³

Remarking that some Cromwells would be useful now (November, 1899), he went on:

He would be strenuous, he would be sincere His faith would be in God and in freedom, and in the influence of Great Britain as promoting, as asserting, both (Cheers).⁴

The Imperialism of the people of England was not the lust for dominion nor the pride of power, but the Ideal of Oliver Cromwell.⁵ Cromwell had made England respected abroad, and it was not strange that England in 1899, ringed with hostility and criticized in every country of the earth for her South African ambitions, longed

¹Spectator, LXXIX (July 24, 1897), 106.

²Review of Reviews, XIX (April, 1899), 321.

³London Times, November 15, 1899, p. 7. ⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid.

for a man like Cromwell, and eagerly accepted the assurance of Mr. Kipling that the Protector's Hebraic Jehovah presided over Britain as her God of battles. In the "Hymn before Action," in The Seven Seas, Kipling invoked this God, as he did again, with greater effect, in "The Recessional." The Wesleyan London Quarterly Review may be quoted in conclusion, from an article which said the same things that Lord Rosebery had said, with an additional note linking Cromwell with the self-immolating Imperialism Kipling so strenuously preached:

. . . . he was not only a great soldier and a great statesman, he was one of the world's great saints The Puritan saint is a man of affairs who treads the common dusty highway of life, but keeps a heart pure and reverent towards God and tender towards men; and who habitually subordinates his private interests to the public good. That is the Puritan saint, and Cromwell was that, and something more. For he had so much of the saintly temperament that he enjoyed great and vivid inward experiences.¹

There were still other influences and conditions in the late nineties that must be recalled if the reception of Kipling after 1897 is to be understood. The temper of Chamberlain has been mentioned: the government in general was hardly less jingoistic. The diaries of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, though they have an obvious liberal bias, have yet a sufficient basis in fact to be instructive about the temper of the age. Blunt found the country deeply bitten with rabid jingoism in every department of activity from government down through literature, religion, journalism, and the stage. In 1893 he accused even Gladstone of aiding and abetting the anti-humane policy of exploiting the South African natives, with Rosebery, and even Morley, assisting.² Morley and the other Liberal members, said Blunt, had been so far brought over to favor the Chamberlain views as to agree that the chief issue in the Transvaal was one of franchise for all white men, and when this concession was made, the whole Liberal case was given away.³ Salisbury entered upon his ministry with the settled design of "avenging Gordon," and guided the appointment of the ultra-jingoistic Alfred Austin as Poet-Laureate.⁴ Austin at this time gave it as his idea of heaven to sit in a garden and receive constant telegrams, announcing alternately a British victory by sea

¹C. Sylvester Horne, "The Cromwell Tercentenary," London Quarterly Review, XCII (July, 1899), 126.

²Blunt, op. cit., p. 116. ³Ibid., p. 328.

⁴Ibid., pp. 204-205.

and a British victory by land.¹ George Wyndham, Irish Chief Secretary, stated that the savage nations had no right to existence at all,² and added later that

the day of talking about legality in Africa is over, all the international law there is there consists of interests and understandings. It is generally agreed by all the Powers that the end of African operations is to civilize it in the interests of Europe, and that to gain that end, all means are good It is not worth while drawing distinctions of right and wrong in the matter, it is entirely a matter of interest.³

In October, 1898, Wyndham was appointed Undersecretary for War. Harcourt, long a Liberal leader, in December 1898 retired from his leadership, the reason being, in Blunt's opinion, the conversion of the whole Liberal press to Jingo Imperialism.⁴

The newspapers before the war were strongly, and with few exceptions, imperialistic. The Daily News approved the commercial wars in Africa.⁵ The Italian defeat in Abyssinia was noticed in the press only with the remark that the fall of the Abyssinian monarchy would not have been seriously felt in the stock market.⁶ About Jameson's Raid, said Blunt, the papers were "sickening . . . a mixture of swagger and poltroonery."⁷ The seizure of the Soudan was greeted by even the so-called Liberal papers as a measure of "reconquering the country for Egypt."⁸ In this group were the Chronicle, the Westminster Gazette, and the Daily Telegraph. A little later Blunt cancelled his subscriptions also to the Daily News and the Manchester Guardian. The Times printed letters like the following:

. my thoughts search history in vain for a spectacle of national heroism greater than or equal to that which Great Britain and her truly noble colonies are presenting to the world at this moment. The crafty and foreigner-aided enemy lies in our territory and across our path, with shell guns on every available hill, and trenches dug between; with barbed wire stretched to protect their cunningly devised lairs, and cover spread to conceal their more or less rebellious persons But have they alarmed us? Have they frightened the isle from its propriety? Have they detached one colony from the Motherland? Have they caused young or old, citizen or noble, poor or rich, small or great, worldling or worshipful, in any part of this Imperial Realm to shrink or hold back from the encounters, however deadly, to which they have challenged us? No, Sir, there has sprung from every part of the Empire a flame of patriotism and of heroism so high that

¹Ibid., p. 280.

²Ibid., p. 283.

³Ibid., p. 299.

⁴Ibid., p. 308.

⁵Ibid., p. 116.

⁶Ibid., p. 217.

⁷Ibid., p. 214.

⁸Ibid., p. 311.

the whole world is, so to speak, alight with it, and depend upon it, while we rejoice, the world wonders and admires.¹

As in the government and in the press, so it was in the church. Blunt recalled John Bright's remark that he had never known the bishops to express disapproval of a war but once, and that was on the occasion of a war to suppress the slave trade.² When the South African War broke out, the Venerable Dr. Alexander, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland, published in the Times a short poem echoing Tennyson and Carlyle:

They say that 'War is Hell,' the 'great accursed,'
The sin impossible to be forgiven--
Yet I can look upon it at its worst,
And still find blue in Heaven!

And as I note how nobly natures form
Under the war's red rain, I deem it true,
That He who made the earthquake and the storm,
Perchance made battles too.³

When Kitchener at Omdurman reported the thousands of the Mahdi's followers slain, Blunt protested in the Times against the slaughter. A parson of the Establishment answered the letter with one of his own:

By a curious coincidence an answer to your letter in the "Times" of yesterday is given in one of the Psalms for this morning's service, viz., Psalm lvi, verses 10-11: "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his footsteps in the blood of the ungodly, so that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous, doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth."⁴

When the Boer War was a year old, and the century had only days more to run, Blunt bade farewell in misanthropic bitterness to his age:

In South Africa our troops are burning farms under Kitchener's command, and the Queen, and the two Houses of Parliament, and the bench of Bishops thank God publicly and vote money for the work The whole white race is revelling openly in violence, as though it had never pretended to be Christian. God's equal curse be on them all!⁵

In belles lettres there was also to be found some defense of the prevailing tendencies. Austin was only one of several writers supporting Imperialism. Swinburne, when the war broke out, wrote a most violent sonnet against the Boers. Henley and John Davidson had approved, and in prose there were Sir Walter

¹Ibid., p. 344.

²Ibid., p. 115.

³Robert Buchanan, "The Voice of the 'Hooligan,'" Contemporary Review, LXXVI (December, 1899), 776.

⁴Blunt, op. cit., p. 297.

⁵Ibid., pp. 375-76.

Besant, Rider Haggard, and scholarly or semi-scholarly writers like Seeley and Dilke. It cannot be said that a host of prominent writers rose to support Imperialism; in fact, most of the writers of repute were rather significantly silent--Hardy, Housman, Galsworthy, Thompson, Bennett, Shaw, Meredith, Barrie--these said little or nothing. In their silence the voices of the few who did speak assumed perhaps undue importance, so that the literature of the late nineties only seems blatant with jingoistic utterance. The stage was but slightly affected; the new social drama of Ibsen and the continent examined personal rather than political problems. Blunt did witness, the day after war was declared, a performance of King John, by Herbert Beerbohm Tree. Tree selected this play, according to Blunt, because it was full of "jingo-tags and no-poper talk," and was suitable for violent ranting.¹

Kipling's Personal History, 1892-1899

Kipling married on January 18, 1892, and started on his wedding trip around the world, a trip that was to have included a visit to Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa, where that writer anxiously looked for European visitors. The closing of a bank in Tokyo so reduced Kipling's funds that he hastily converted the rest of his Cook's ticket into cash and left Japan for the United States and Vermont, where he settled near Brattleboro, the home of Mrs. Kipling's people. By spring, 1892, they were established, and soon afterward they bought property and built a house, "The Naulakha," and lived quietly, Kipling writing steadily. Behind him were his ten prose volumes, his Departmental Ditties, and his most popular and so far most imperialistic work, the Barrack-Room Ballads. In America he wrote Many Inventions (1893), The Jungle Book (1894), The Second Jungle Book (1895), and The Seven Seas (1896). The two Jungle Books added greatly to his literary fame, and The Seven Seas struck the first explicit notes of aggressive Imperialism, adumbrating the messages later to be embodied in "The Recessional" and "The White Man's Burden." Had The Seven Seas more directly followed the Barrack-Room Ballads, and had Kipling remained in England, the destined exaltation of his name might have come more gradually, and seemed less spectacular--a kind of steady development. As it was, however, his extended residence abroad removed him from the place where he was to be deified, and

¹Ibid., p. 332.

postponed the recognition of his special message until it could fall suddenly on the ears of his countrymen in a moment of crisis or excitement. On the other hand, had Kipling remained in America, England might have been less and less concerned about him; he would have been simply a colonial-born writer who had, after a year in London, married an American and gone to the United States to live.

So far as anyone, even Kipling himself, appeared to know, America was thenceforth to be his home; there he built his house, started a family, wrote, grew richer, and seemed satisfied. "I don't quite think," he wrote to William Dean Howells in 1896, "of quitting the land permanently. It is hard to go from where one has raised one's kids and builded a wall and digged a well and planted a tree."¹ It was the season of Gladstone's last ministry, and perhaps Kipling was well content to be away, although he was by no means in the way of becoming completely Americanized, for Arthur Conan Doyle, visiting him in 1894, thought it necessary to remonstrate with him against his too insistent pulling of feathers from the eagle's tail in retaliation for American tail-twistings of the British lion.² In 1895 the Liberals were routed. In December of that year came the Jameson Raid. On neither of these two occasions did Kipling utter any noteworthy public opinion, a rather peculiar fact for one of his political inclinations and Imperial bias; Jameson was before long to be a fairly close friend. Until well after the Unionist victory and the Jameson Raid Kipling seemed well content to remain in the United States.

Suddenly, in the late summer of 1896, the Kiplings were in England. The author's own explanation of his sudden migration was that developments in England were the attraction that drew him home, although America got some of the blame also:

I felt that the atmosphere was to some extent hostile. The idea seemed to be that I was "making money" out of America--witness the new house and the horses--and was not sufficiently grateful for my privileges. My visits to England and the talk there persuaded me that the English scene might be shifting to some new developments, which would be worth watching.³

¹Howells, *The Life in Letters of William Dean Howells*, ed. Mildred Howells (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1928), II, 66.

²Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1924), p. 245.

³Kipling, *Something of Myself for My Friends Known and Unknown* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1937), p. 142.

According to recent investigation, Kipling's explanation of his departure from America is only partial truth, the immediate cause, at least, having been a furious quarrel with his brother-in-law, Beatty Balestier. Kipling complained to the law because of personal threats the latter had made against him; Balestier was arraigned, and the trial was near, the defendant deliberately inviting the suit, when Kipling apparently realized the damage that might accrue to his name if the newspapers told the world that the rich and famous author was persecuting his poor brother-in-law.¹ Perhaps also, ordinary family feelings moved him. At any rate, almost overnight he fled from the trial and from the land. It seems therefore not wholly true that he went home solely because of Imperialistic developments in England, although it remains true that his return was fruitfully coincident with those developments.

Whatever the reasons may have been, home Kipling came, in September, 1896, in time to hear the first favorable responses to The Seven Seas reverberate up and down the land. In these verses more than in the Barrack-Room Ballads, and more than in anything before or since then, Imperialism was the dominant theme, as the title itself suggested; they definitely paved the way for "The Recessional." Kipling was poising for the greatest flight of his life, and for a period of such sensational fame as had not befallen any writer in modern England. Eighteen ninety-seven came, and with it the Diamond Jubilee. Other poets--Austin the Laureate, and Courthope--wrote formal Jubilee odes, and the Jubilee passed, but there was no word from Kipling, who was off with Captain Bagley, watching summer navy maneuvers, as a guest of the navy. Almost a month passed before, on July 17, 1897, "The Recessional" was released in the Times. Kipling said in his autobiography that he wrote the poem before going away to sea, but laid it by, not sure that the time was ripe, and released it only after his return. At what time Kipling conceived the idea of writing a poem to follow rather than to greet the festivities of the Jubilee is not easy to say, but the issue justified the plan. Sober second thought had time to assert itself, and the mood of the nation time to enter into a state as "recessional" as the solemn tone of the hymn itself. Kipling's timing was perfect.

Late in 1897 came out Captains Courageous, written in

¹Frederic F. Van de Water, "Rudyard Kipling's Feud," Harper's Magazine, May, 1937, pp. 569-77.

America, and then Kipling, his curiosity and his uneasiness driving him, set sail for South Africa to see for himself what was happening there. He had seen Cecil Rhodes there on a previous visit, somewhere between 1889 and 1891, but had not met the man. Now he became closely associated with Rhodes, establishing very soon a home on the Rhodes estate of Groote Schur, whither he repaired with his family every year thereafter until the death of Rhodes. Precisely what passed between the two Imperialists in the last three years of the century has not been written, but the bond of sympathy was strong and the association was close. Early in 1898 Kipling returned to England, and in the remainder of the year published The Day's Work and A Fleet in Being.

Eighteen ninety-nine was the year of apotheosis. On February 4 appeared in the Times "The White Man's Burden," well received and highly applauded, but also tremendously misunderstood, and therefore contributing vastly to the impression that Kipling was a ranting expansionist. He had gone to New York on a visit, attracted partly by the emergence of the United States as an Imperialist power after the Spanish-American War. It was to the United States that he addressed "The White Man's Burden," with a special eye perhaps to Theodore Roosevelt, whom he knew personally. Whatever the poem meant, it meant first and most of all that Imperialism was a burden, and that no nation had any right to regard it in any other light. Hence the highly serious adjuration to the United States, reminding that country, as "The Recessional" had jarringly reminded England, that the first feeling of a conquering nation ought to be a feeling of responsibility.

In New York, late in February, illness prostrated Kipling, and took away also his daughter Josephine. For three weeks he was world news, the newspapers making the most of the situation. He had reached the peak of his fame. Even those who had never read his work could not now escape awareness of him. And when he recovered, he did not decline from the peak. A steady excitement was astir in England over the intensifying drama in South Africa, and Kipling had not well recovered when it became clear that war could be avoided only by unlikely miracle. On the eve of war, Kipling wrote "The Old Issue," interpreting the coming struggle as another one of England's many battles for liberty against the old enemy of autocracy. Soon after the beginning of hostilities came "The Absent-minded Beggar," written to benefit the fund for soldiers' comforts, and drawing through public recitations the

amazing sum of two thousand pounds the line, all told.¹ Meanwhile Kipling had written Stalky & Co, published in December, 1899. So the year closed, and so came to an end the period of Kipling's greatest fame.

The Climax of Kipling's Fame

It is now necessary to return to the end of 1896, after the publication of The Seven Seas, in order to survey the responses given to the various works named in the preceding short history of Kipling's life since that time. The survey shows only praise and popularity, without even the qualifications that had leavened the reviews in the time of his first fame. The Jungle Books, 1894-1895, had nonplused England a little, as not quite the adult sort of thing it was accustomed to from Kipling, and not quite in the pattern with the Barrack-Room Ballads. There were some small yawns, agreeable ones, to be sure, and Punch wrote an epitaph:

The Last of Mowgli

("The Man-Pack do not love jungle tales."--Rudyard Kipling in the PMG of Sep. 26)

Sacred to the Memory

of

Mowgli

Alias Little Frog, Manling, Nathoo, and Master of the Jungle
Who

After lingering on in columns of print,
Came to a Doubtful End

In a series of Asterisks in an Evening Paper,
And in the Paws of Baloo.

He Was

Of Uncertain Parentage

Of Unprincipled Character,

Of Carnivorous and generally Unpleasant
Habits

And

Though he had one or two Good Points,
On the whole may be described

As

A thorough-paced young rascal.

He had

(In common with the rest of the Jungle People)

A curious and somewhat incomprehensible

style of expressing HIMSELF

In Metaphors and Master-words

Which after a bit

Rather got on one's Nerves, unless, of course,
You like that sort of thing.

He was, however,

Considered by some to be Good Copy,

And, as such,

His temporary Extinction

¹ Athenaeum, October 10, 1903, p. 475.

Is mourned by his sorrowing Editors and
Publishers.
He will probably re-appear
At a later date
In three-and-sixpenny book-form
Where we wish HIM
All possible success and a few elucidatory
FOOTNOTES.
And now
In the words of the PANTHER BAGHEERA,
Is the Time of New Talk.¹

The Seven Seas was eagerly awaited and avidly read. Arnold Bennett "gulped it down with deep joy," and remarked on the crimson piles of it in every bookshop in London.² In his Journal for November 5, 1896, he wrote, "Today was published Kipling's The Seven Seas. Red letter day."³ Henry James said of the book,

I am laid low by the absolute uncanny talent--the prodigious special faculty of it. It's all violent, without a dream of a nuance, or a hint of 'distinction'; all prose trumpets and castanets and such--with never a touch of the fiddle-string or a note of the nightingale. But it's magnificent and masterly in its way, and full of the most insidious art. He's a rum 'un--and one of the very few first talents of the time. There's a vilely idiotic reference to his 'coarseness' in this a.m.'s Chronicle. The coarseness of The Mary Gloster is absolutely⁴ one of the most triumphant values of that triumphant thing.

Thenceforward, until "The Recessional," evidence of Kipling's hold on the public did not fail. His prices went up. In May, 1897, Departmental Ditties went to a ninth edition; the Academy, commenting, remarked that Kipling was now less tolerant, more obviously cynical, but more patriotic and military than when the volume first appeared a decade before.⁵ In July the Bookman saw prospects of a new uniform edition of all the works. Also in July, some weeks before "The Recessional," the Quarterly Review in an article labelled "Some Minor Poets," said,

. . . . he is the only one of our modern poets who, with all his emphatic individuality and robust violence, has habitually abandoned himself to his characters, to ideas, and to patriotism. . . . He is good for the flabbiness, and the critical uncreativity of our generation.⁶

¹Punch, CIX (October 5, 1895), 165.

²Books and Persons. Being Comments on a Past Epoch.
1908-11 (New York: George Doran Co., 1917), p. 160.

³The Journal of Arnold Bennett (Garden City, N. Y.: The Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1932-1933), p. 24.

⁴The Letters of Henry James, ed. Percy Lubbock (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), I, 249.

⁵LI (May 1, 1897), 476.

⁶CLXXXVI (July, 1897), 330.

The Times could not conceive of a Diamond Jubilee without a poem from Kipling, as is shown by Kipling himself in a reminiscence about his hymn:

That poem gave me more trouble than anything I ever wrote. I had promised The Times a poem on the Jubilee, and when it became due I had written nothing that had satisfied me. The Times began to want that poem badly, and sent letter after letter asking for it. I had many more attempts, but no further progress. Finally The Times began sending telegrams. So I shut myself in a room with the determination to stay there until I had written a Jubilee poem.¹

Finally, also in July, when "The Recessional" was probably already written, if Kipling's autobiographical statement is reliable--that he laid it by until his return from navy maneuvers--in July the Academy noted that there was much comment on Kipling's absence from among the Jubilee poets, and quoted from the Saturday Review article on Jubilee Honours, of which Kipling had received none,

There is one name in literature which, from the special point of view of the growth of the Imperial idea, might well have received recognition--we mean Mr. Rudyard Kipling. There is no question that it is he who has chiefly implanted in English minds the idea of the vast federal empire around the globe, the central idea which has made this Jubilee different from anything ever witnessed before. In this sense Kipling is greater than Wolseley, greater than Roberts, greater than both combined. Yet he has been given no honour. Verily the administrators and defenders of the empire have been exalted at the expense of its real makers.²

"Our own view," the Academy added, ". . . is that Jubilee honours are not ennobling, but we are glad to see Mr. Kipling thus spoken of."³

To such a pass had matters come by midyear, 1897, that it was cause for comment when Kipling did not write a poem on a national occasion. The Seven Seas had contained much matter addressed directly to the nation as a nation, and had therefore partially assumed a political rather than a literary character. This submergence of the literary and the emergence of the political helps to explain his influence, for it coincided with the change in interest and temper of the British nation that has already been pointed out--the newly aroused interest in government and policy that developed around the time of the Jameson Raid. England was ripe for Kipling's appeal. "The two Jubilees made

¹Cecil Charles, Rudyard Kipling. His Life and Works (London: J. Hewetson & Son, 1911), pp. 44-45.

²Quoted in Academy, LII (July 3, 1897), 12.

³Ibid.

him. England was drab and dark-clothed until Jubilee of '97 brought the colours of the world to London, and Kipling gave England what suited her."¹

"The Recessional" appeared in the Times July 17, 1897. Osbert Burdett, writing almost thirty years later, said,

The most sincere emotion aroused by the celebration [the Jubilee] was the instant response given to the Recessional by Rudyard Kipling. . . . The Bishops especially were delighted The poem became a hymn acceptable to the church, and its author was canonized by admission to the appendix to the Book of Common Prayer The Hymn is perhaps the single example of its author's genius in which all can concur without reserve He [Kipling] was the antithesis of the Yellow Book school.²

Burdett does not overstate the warmth of the reception given to the hymn, although it must be remembered that the poem came a month after the Jubilee proper, and that, warm as the response was, it was not nearly so universal or widespread as is generally assumed, in the first weeks or even months after its appearance. Certain extravagant praises were instantly launched, but there was no great spread of sentiment until, by gradual diffusion over almost two years, enthusiasm had caught widely at the poem, partly on its own account, and partly because it was drawn into association with other deeds and vicissitudes that presently befell Kipling and exalted him.

One week after the hymn appeared, the Spectator, breaking through every reserve, monumentally lauded Kipling and the poem, and the England for which they stood. There was all the emotion of worship in the review, which ran to the unusual length of some two thousand words. It can here only be summarized.

Kipling, the review began, had done more than write a literary masterpiece--he had touched deeply the heart of the nation; and he had done it, not by flattery, but by the simplest, sternest appeal men could feel--the religious appeal. If the religious sentiment did not exist powerfully in England, the poem would be incomprehensible. Kipling had the old Puritan spirit of seriousness and piety--not always, perhaps, but certainly here--and thus he touched profoundly the English spirit of patriotism, which always had a strain of Puritanism in it. For some years now Kipling had been interpreter to the nation, telling it what

¹West, "Rudyard Kipling," op. cit., p. 112.

²The Beardsley Period. An Essay in Perspective (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925), pp. 85, 87, 88, 89.

it most deeply felt; now, more than ever, he had caught and put into words what all serious Englishmen had been feeling all through the Jubilee--the humble dread that rejoicings and shoutings alone were no proper manifestations of the Imperial spirit. Vainglory could lead only to ruin. England needed Kipling's solemn reminder, "Lest we forget--lest we forget." However, "The Recessional" did not ask England to abase herself in terror; there was nothing wrong in Jubilee pomp and splendor, so long as these were merely an outward sign of thanksgiving, and so long as the true spirit behind the show remained one of humility, contrition, and prayerfulness. England was every inch as great as the Jubilee had persuaded her she was; only--it was needful to remember that such greatness came from God. The instant welcome accorded Kipling's hymn showed that all England felt properly about the matter, and that "we are still God's Englishmen." In no other country could a poem of such deep elemental piety have so deeply moved the people; in France, for example, the inhuman maxim of art for art's sake would have stiffened the poem into a piece of frigid rhetoric. In other countries, no doubt, both Kipling's poem and the feeling with which the English people received it, looked suspiciously like hypocrisy--like Carthage boasting of her worth. From such hypocrisy, however, England was saved by her religious seriousness, her deep sense of responsibility to her empire, and her sense that all her greatness was from God. In fact, so great and overwhelming was her religious seriousness, her Puritan conscience, that it was difficult to keep from boasting a little about it, and so violating, in very humility, the Kipling command to avoid the frantic boast and foolish word.¹

This review is both the warmest and the longest of those that followed hard on the appearance of "The Recessional," and reveals most of the ingredients of the "higher," as well as some of those of the "lower" Imperialism. It is a classic statement of the 1897 attitude toward Kipling and empire. The commercial motive is ignored, and the whole process of expansion is sentimentalized with the help of references to England's past, to her greatness, her moral tradition, her religious character, her political genius, and her self-sacrificing labors in behalf of the colored peoples of the world. The fact of power became easily a reason for power; England's singular physical greatness looked like a destiny with a

¹"Mr. Kipling's Hymn," Spectator, LXXIX (July 24, 1897), 106-107.

mandate, and the search for meaning in the situation led naturally up to God, who must assuredly be exalting this one race for great purposes. Such a feeling was pleasant, and gratitude came easily enough, even without the reminder in Kipling's poem; with that reminder, feeling simply overflowed. The Spectator's review contained much that in a time less highly emotional it would never have thought of printing.

On the same day, the Academy reviewed "The Recessional," not at great length, nor so unrestrainedly as the Spectator, but wholly favorably: now England knew why the great Imperialist had held his hand--Mr. Kipling knew both how and when to strike. The Daily Chronicle had not taken well to the poem, because it did not like any rebuke to jingoism. It had said that Kipling's assumption of the role of national admonisher beat cock-fighting; that when England wanted admonishment she turned to Milton and Wordsworth; and that England liked Kipling for his Tommies, not for his philosophy. For these heresies the Academy rebuked the Chronicle, saying that "The Recessional" was natural successor to The Seven Seas, to whose national admonishment no one had objected. No Englishman deserved of England more generous treatment than did Rudyard Kipling.¹

That same week Punch mocked the Poet Laureate Austin in a skit labelled "A Surprise":

Time--Breakfast time, Saturday, July 17. Scene--The Laureate's Bower. Harp and Laurel-crown suspended. Tea and toast on table.

Alfredo Austino (starting, as he opens his 'Times,' and first catches sight of Rudyard Kipling's poem, and then reads conclusion of leading article, where R. K.'s verses are extolled for their 'simple grandeur.') "'Recessional,' indeed! This is rather too progressional! (Laying down the newspaper and appealing to the world generally.) Hang it! Am I the Laureate, or am I not?"

(Meditates over cup of tea, and wishes he had thought of 'Recessional.')

Austin's poem, "Victoria, June 20, 1837--June 20, 1897," had been, like many of its author's other demonstrations, somewhat unfortunate, for during a Jubilee given wholly to celebrating the Queen's greatness, he had put into her mouth the lines:

Being a woman only, I can be
Not great, but good.³

¹Academy, LII (July 24, 1897), 72.

²CXIII (July 24, 1897), 29.

³Academy, LI (June 26, 1897), 651.

Minor notices accrued to the honor of "The Recessional" in the following weeks. In November, Blackwoods added its name to the list of notable endorsers, saying, among other things:

. . . . we venture to predict that English poetry will be permanently enriched by Mr. Kipling's pen more signally than by that of any other living writer. True, his sins have been many. Who has not winced under a thousand needless flippancies, a thousand deviations from good taste? It is not upon his almost diabolical cleverness and versatility that we build, nor even upon the fine qualities conspicuous in "The Flag of England." But we turn to that memorable "Recessional," which alone of all the poems that have appeared since the late Laureate's death, made an instantaneous and deep impression on the public intellect and conscience, and unless we mistake the matter, there we find precisely that nobility of sentiment, that weight, that sense of responsibility which that poet must needs possess in full measure who aspires to be called great.¹

Sir William Watson, in "The Unknown God," had replied to "The Recessional" in a stanza which attracted some attention:

Best by remembering God, say some,
We keep our high Imperial lot.
Fortune, methinks, hath oftenest come
When we forgot--when we forgot.

The stanza uttered considerable common truth, and like much criticism and parody of Kipling, was clever and effective, but, also like much Kipling criticism then and later, was resented by defenders of the poet of Imperialism. The Academy quoted the stanza, and wondered whether Kipling would reply to the implied slur on his poem and on Imperialism.² Some time later the London Quarterly Review regretted the "dreary creed of the agnostic" in Watson's poem, and wished Kipling "with whole-hearted sincerity a long lease of creative activity."³

In the remaining months of 1897, partly because of the appearance of Captains Courageous late in October, "The Recessional" passed from the forefront of the reviews, not to be revived until 1899. Kipling, however, remained news, and his vogue mounted steeply, as the Book Buyer noted in September, 1897:

One marked tendency of collectors may be noted which has developed within the last year, and that is the collecting of first editions of Rudyard Kipling. It may be called a craze. The Allahabad issues of his various tales bring pounds where they were published at rupees, while "Plain Tales from the Hills" and "Departmental Ditties," in first edition, come dangerously near the \$100 line in prices paid for them.⁴

¹CLXII (November, 1897), 629.

²LII (September 4, 1897), 182.

³LXXXIX (January, 1898), 335-36.

⁴XV, 140.

In October the new edition de luxe, in twelve volumes, not yet ready for publication, had risen from the originally advertised price of six guineas to nine guineas; the first edition was for 1,050 copies, and the few unsubscribed sets were being held for a further rise. First editions of Wee Willie Winkle, 1890, were selling for two pounds two shillings, and the Barrack-Room Ballads, 1892, for one pound five shillings.¹ They had originally been six-shilling volumes. More significant than the prices themselves were the facts that such rises in value occurred so soon after first publication, just after Kipling's return from residence in America, just after his emergence as Imperialist and as a definitely political voice, and just when, with the accession of Chamberlain, Imperial policy was entering the most feverish period of its long history in England. There is little doubt that as the policy and the sentiment raced with each other, they mutually stimulated each other, so that, in the atmosphere of Jubilee, of African tension, and of general fin de siècle crumbling of restraint, Imperialism attained an undue and unnatural prominence among the values of the day. Joseph Conrad, not at all carried away by Kipling's literary ability, nevertheless admitted in 1897 that perhaps he saw the political future with prophet's vision:

. . . . Mr. Kipling has the wisdom of the passing generations, and holds it in perfect sincerity. Some of his work is of impeccable form and because of that little thing, he will sojourn in Hell only a very short while. He squints with the rest of his excellent sort. It is a beautiful squint; it is an useful squint. And--after all,--perhaps he sees round the corner?²

In October, 1897, appeared Captains Courageous, Kipling's third novel. His autobiography tells of the search for details of atmosphere and technical accuracy that preceded the composition of the story, even to the obtaining, from an American railway magnate, of an elaborately worked-out train schedule for a fast rail journey from the Pacific coast to the East. The result was a collection of details that evoked expressions of amazement from all the reviewers. As usual, however, Kipling had kept from smothering the story with this detail, but had so presented it that it became one of the attractions. If the story was slender, and the descriptive element large, and if thereby conventional fiction technique

¹Academy, LII (October 9, 1897), 282, 284.

²Life and Letters, ed. G. Jean-Aubry (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday Page & Co., 1927), I, 208.

was apparently flouted, the answer was that a man like Kipling could afford to override the law. This note in the reviews raised Kipling to new levels, as a genius who made his own law, and further augmented the reputation that had grown so rapidly in the last few months. The Academy voiced this new criterion first, and others concurred.¹ It was debatable, said the Academy, whether this was the story of fishermen, or the story of Harvey Cheyne. The descriptions were the finest thing in the book, but they were mostly gratuitous--the story could just as well have been a short story. The reviewer, however, closed significantly by saying that one would not miss the descriptions for a world of well-written novels.

Thus does genius override law by making another law, convincing us of the legality of the act, and demonstrating its fitness with a triumphant example. Mr. Kipling finds naught common on the earth. He takes the common things by choice, and they become distinguished--even cod.

Equally favorable was the review by the Spectator, which praised mainly the well-wrought moral and physical atmosphere, and closed by saying that "obedience and the power to take orders and execute them loyally and without any false sense of pride is essential to a well-ordered and happy life."² Only Henry James dissented. In December, 1897, he voiced the decline of his hope for Kipling's prose future, however secure might be his ballad future. There would be no English Balzac, but only steam and patriotism, and the latter only in verse. "He has come steadily from the less simple in subject to the more simple--from the Anglo-Indians to the natives, from the natives to the Tommies, from the Tommies to the quadrupeds, from the quadrupeds to the fish, and from the fish to the engines and the screws."³ Eighteen ninety-seven closed with two minor performances--the Almanac of Twelve Sports, verses to accompany drawings by Harold Nicholson, and the poem, "The Feet of the Young Men," a piece celebrating the steady advance into the outer regions of the earth of the feet of exploring and pioneering Englishmen. The latter received rather high praise, but the verses in the Almanac attracted little attention, being inferior to the drawings. One aspect of these verses, however, is significant: opposite the illustration for cricket, for the month

¹Academy, LII (October 30, 1897), 98-99, 359.

²LXXIX (November 6, 1897), 697.

³Letters, I. 270-71.

of June, appeared the following forerunner of the bitter denunciation of athletes that was to appear in the "Islanders" in 1902:

Thank God who made the British Isles,
And taught me how to play,
I do not worship crocodiles,
Or bow the knee to clay!

Give me a willow wand and I,
With hide, and cork, and twine,
From century to century,
Will gambol round my shrine.¹

The year 1898 was for Kipling externally a quiet year, without much publication and without much publicity. America went to war with Spain, Kitchener defeated the Mahdi at Omdurman early in September and so "avenged Gordon," and later in the same year thrilled England again by frustrating at Fashoda the French attempt to extend influence in the Upper Nile. Colonial affairs occupied the center of the stage. Kipling spent the early part of the year in South Africa, apparently not without active participation in the propaganda that was pushing forward in Cape Town the interests of Imperialism against the Boers. On one occasion at least he attended the Anglo-African Writers' Club dinner, when Rider Haggard was chairman, and shared in the speech making with the best of them.² Rhodes was unable to attend.

In the absence of publications and of Kipling himself, there was a dearth of publicity, though there were intermittent notices of one kind or another that showed how firmly Kipling's reputation was built. On January 13, 1898, Arnold Bennett wrote in his Journal:

Lever Tillotson, of Tillotson & Son, the literary agents, called to offer me some serials for Woman. He gave me some interesting details as to 'prices per thousand.' Thomas Hardy is being outstripped by some of the younger men. He stands now only equal with H. G. Wells, at 12 guineas per thousand, which is also the price of the blood and thunder William Le Queux. Stanley Weyman, because of his large following in America, can only be bought at 16 to 18 guineas per thousand. Kipling stands solitary and terrible at £50 per thousand, £200 being his minimum for his shortest short story.³

The London Quarterly Review made copy out of a general review of the works of Kipling's middle and later periods, ending with its usual endorsement of their author's Wesleyanism: the story teller's art had been perfect in Kipling from the beginning; the

¹Academy, LII (December 4, 1897), 483.

²R. Thurston Hopkins, Rudyard Kipling. A Literary Appreciation (New York: Frederick Stokes & Co., 1916), pp. 146-47.

³The Journal of Arnold Bennett, pp. 72-73.

ugliness he portrayed was no flaw, for he never made it seem good, as the decadents did, and so he took his place with Spenser; he had awakened Atkins to new and happier moods, and had helped him to fight better; he had made great advance as a poet since the Barrack-Room Ballads; The Light That Failed was irritating and disappointing, but preached a noble ideal of good work; "The Recessional" and the "Hymn before Action" were notable for their deeply religious spirit, and Watson was to be condemned for satirizing such a spirit.¹ Also in January came the statement in Blackwoods, by Sir Herbert Maxwell, that the Ministers--Lord Salisbury, Lord Lansdowne, and Lord John Francis Hamilton--go to Kipling to be instructed in the reorganization of the army. The Review of Reviews averred that the statement was made at least half seriously.² Samuel Butler ventured some literary judgments in reply to Professor Galeoto, who had inquired about Alfred Austin. Austin, wrote Butler, had over thirty works,

and I have never either read or heard of a single one of them I think you should omit Miss Mary Robinson from your list of leading poets; but you should, I think, mention Rudyard Kipling. As for estimating the comparative merits of Alfred Austin and Lewis Morris, I could not attempt such a task without at any rate reading some of the works of one or both of these writers--a labor which I beg to assure you is far beyond my strength.³

Until fall, 1898, Kipling gave occasion for no new publicity. Then came The Day's Work, of which the Bookman said, in part:

The volume opens with a display of Mr. Kipling's best force. 'The Bridge Builders' is a magnificent story, and a kind of summary of his strength. His consummate skill in using technical knowledge; his robust and intelligent appreciation of work and heroism; his sense of the great and lasting things above man's little life have seldom been given better expression an indescribable medley of realism and mysticism that never revolts the imagination. The tale is enough to redeem any book. This one needs some redemption. Readers would be well advised to close it at page 44. Of course, they won't. In their persistent march through, they will meet one other story, inferior to 'The Bridge Builders,' but wonderfully vivid Of the rest, what can one say? There is cleverness enough, though even that fails in 'My Sunday at Home,' and 'The Brushwood Boy.' Readers without a palate used to class Mr. Kipling and Mrs. Steel together, on the intelli-

¹London Quarterly Review, LXXXIX (January, 1898), 325-36.

²XVII (January, 1898), 38.

³Henry F. Jones, Samuel Butler A Memoir (London: Macmillan Co., Ltd., 1919), II, 293.

gent ground that they both wrote of the east! But now at last they are justified. 'William the Conqueror' is exactly in Mrs. Steele's second best vein: William is a girl after her own heart. 'A Walking Delegate,' 'The Ship That Found Herself,' (this in its own way perfect), '.007,' and 'The Maltese Cat' are of the kind of moral tales that are good if you can read them, but are otherwise intolerable. To allegory-loving youth, if such exist, we recommend them. Their intentions are instructive, and the moral in all save 'A Walking Delegate,' which is ungenerous, is either good, or at least harmless.

But yet the volume must be honorably remembered, for it contains 'The Bridge Builders.'¹

Something like qualified respect met The Day's Work in most quarters. The book sold well in England, its sales ranking, in the six months from September, 1898, to the end of February, 1899, respectively first, ninth, ninth, seventh, fifth, and tenth. In Scotland it ranked first for three months, then fifth, seventh, and eighth.² "The success of 'The Day's Work,'" said the Scottish booksellers, "was quite phenomenal."³ Actual figures on the sales of Kipling's works do not mean a great deal; at best his sales ran, not to hundreds of thousands, but to scores of thousands. The number of readers, however, was always much greater than the number of sales, for there prevailed in England the system of hiring books from the lending library and avoiding the purchase of them. Arnold Bennett remarked that in England there was no book-buying tradition, but only a lending and borrowing tradition. "The family is one of these that are too rich to buy books; it can only hire."⁴ And Blumenfeld in his reminiscences made the same criticism: "The trouble in this country is that the average people do not buy books, but subscribe to the pernicious library system."⁵

The Day's Work proved a little boring to Punch, and, as he had done after the Jungle Books, so he now again assumed the role of public defender in a parody of Kipling's machinery talk, and concluded,

O Kipling mine, where are you roaming?
And so in a babel of highly technical conversation from
axles, wheels, hubs, brakes, horses, asses, lamp-posts,

¹Bookman (L), XV (November, 1898), 52-53.

²"Monthly Reports of the Bookselling Trade," Ibid. (October, 1898-September, 1899), Vols. XV, XVI.

³Ibid., XV (November, 1898), 34.

⁴Books and Persons, p. 167.

⁵R. D. Blumenfeld, In the Days of Bicycles and Bustles (New York: Brewer & Warren, 1930), p. 17.

letter-boxes, and the rest, the Day's Talk went on, amid the scarcely concealed yawns of the reading public.¹

That Kipling's reputation did not decline in 1898, and that he enjoyed special honor in military and naval circles among the men whom his verse and his fiction had often glorified, is evident from another entry in Arnold Bennett's Journal, October 22, 1898:

This is my idea of fame: At an entertainment aboard the H. M. S. Majestic, Rudyard Kipling, one of the guests, read Soldier and Sailor Too, and was encored. He then read The Flag of England. At the conclusion a body of subalterns swept him off the stage, and chaired him round the quarter-deck, while 'For he's a jolly good fellow' was played by the ²massed bands of the fleet and sung by 200 officers assembled.

In November, 1898, some Kipling first editions were selling at high prices: Echoes, 19 pounds 5 shillings; Departmental Ditties, 19 pounds; A Christmas Quartette, 12 pounds 10 shillings; The Phantom 'Rickshaw, 1 pound 10 shillings; Letters of Marque, 6 pounds 15 shillings.³

In December, 1898, came out A Fleet in Being, as a shilling volume. It made no stir in the press, all the material in it, except some notes, having been published in the Morning Post in the preceding month. At about this time too Kipling stopped the sale of The City of Dreadful Night, Letters of Marque, and Echoes. Prices on these items immediately soared, and Sotheby's did a good business. "A First Administration," printed in India and since suppressed, was at this time the highest-priced Kipling relic.⁴

The record of Kipling's reception in 1898 may well close with brief extracts from two literary histories written in this year, one by Mrs. Oliphant, the other by Clement Shorter. Mrs. Oliphant said, after praising Kipling without stint, "It would be impossible to wind up a record of living writers with anything more full of promise for the future than the names of these two young men."⁵ Those "two young men" were Barrie and Kipling. Clement Shorter said,

Another living poet who has been well and justly praised is Rudyard Kipling. He made his earliest fame as a writer of

¹Punch, CXV (November 12, 1898), 221.

²P. 84.

³Forster's Notebook on Kipling (Birmingham: The Holland Co., 1898), p. 11.

⁴Bookman (L), XV (December, 1898), 65.

⁵Mrs. Margaret Oliphant, The Victorian Age of English Literature (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1898), p. 507.

short stories of Indian military life. . . . It is as a poet, however, that he will perhaps longest retain his hold. . . . His 'Barrack-Room Ballads' are finely touched with that martial spirit which so strongly appeals to the heart of our nation.¹

In this notice it appears that by 1898 the literary Kipling, of the short stories, had been submerged by the Imperial Kipling of the patriotic verses.

Eighteen ninety-nine was Kipling's wonderful year. If 1898 was fallow, 1899 was prolific, both in performance and in extravagant adulation. There was probably a large disproportion between the merit of the performances and the degree of adulation, but at the time all sense of values was lost. In England the drift toward war in the first three quarters of the year, and the fact of war in the last quarter were the major circumstances in the background. Against this background must be placed five developments in Kipling's history that, under the circumstances, wrought what amounted to his deification. These five were "The White Man's Burden," Kipling's serious illness, "The Old Issue," "The Absent-minded Beggar," and Stalky & Co. To them may be added a sixth--the revival of the memories of "The Recessional" and other literary and imperialistic pieces in the time when it seemed certain that their author would not live, and when, as the war finally broke out, it seemed as if one man's long advocacy of Empire was about to be obeyed by a whole nation. Of the five "developments," the illness and "The Absent-minded Beggar" were the most influential in producing the apotheosis of the year. These were broadcast by modern means of communication, and made significant by political coincidence. It was not any rabid anti-Boer sentiment ever expressed by Kipling that popularized him then, for, if one seeks to compare his anti-Boer utterances with those of Austin and Swinburne, or with the inflammatory jingo speeches occurring during that summer and autumn, one presently learns that there exists no body of anti-Boer propaganda by Kipling. Nowhere does he speak of the Boers as venomously as at other times he spoke of the Irish, the Germans, and the Russians.

The year began mildly. The February issue of W. T. Stead's Review of Reviews carried a notice about the strong "Peace Crusade" Stead was then sponsoring, ironically enough, as it turned out, installing "The Recessional" as the pacifist "hymn for remembrance"

¹Shorter, Victorian Literature. Sixty Years of Books and Bookmen (London: James Bowden, 1898), p. 40.

to accompany the elaborate liturgy of the Crusade.¹ On February 4 appeared in the American Outlook an essay on Kipling by Robert Bridges, uniformly praising its subject: his conception of power at work has impressed strong men; he is most modern in his romance; his realism is well balanced, uniting the pleasant with the unpleasant; he has a proper admiration for men who make shortcuts to achievement; he respects the day's work; he has enough idealism, and reveals an underlying pathos; for his age's weakness he is a splendid stimulating force.² In this same month Kipling received the unusual tribute of having a magazine make its appearance, dedicated and wholly devoted to himself. It was called A Kipling Note Book, and ran for twelve numbers, from February, 1899, to January, 1900.

"The White Man's Burden" appeared in the Times, for its English publication, February 4, 1899. It had an effect not unlike that of the great "Recessional," though not so deep. Most impressed of the English journals was the Review of Reviews, which labelled the piece "an international document of the first order of importance."³ Stead himself wrote at length. Appeals like this poem, he said, appeals to self-sacrifice, were more powerful than appeals to vanity and avarice. The poem would do more to silence Mr. Carnegie and the Anti-Imperialist League than anything else. Stead himself had started as an Anti-Imperialist, under the influence of a book like Howitt's story of maltreatment of the natives, but had shifted his views since, in the belief that it was best for Imperial authority to control the hitherto unchecked exploitation of the natives by unprincipled adventurers. He extolled the "Anglo-Indian terrestrial Providence, acting as a kind of tutelary deity for the extirpation of the worst evils which afflict humanity." Since the races could not be kept apart, it was best to control their contacts--follow the rowdy with the policeman, as Kipling had always suggested.⁴

The Academy followed with the judgment that for its immediate effect the new poem took rank with "The Recessional." Mr. Kipling might sometimes be cryptic, but as an Imperialist he had hit upon the simplest way of reaching the people.⁵ The

¹Review of Reviews, XIX (February, 1899), 131.

²LXI (February 4, 1899), 281-84.

³XIX (February, 1899), 139. ⁴Ibid., p. 107.

⁵LVI (February 11, 1899), 177.

Spectator also, as when "The Recessional" appeared, responded with the warmest approval:

It is the prerogative of Mr. Kipling to embody in ringing verse the latent thought of the English-speaking peoples. All England leaped at "The Recessional," for he expressed in those fine lines our secret fear that we were growing vainglorious, too full of the pride of life, too charmed with our own success, and that we needed pardon from the Lord for spiritual fatness The "White Man's Burden" conveys in language almost as powerful though not quite as simple, as that of the "Recessional," the truth which we have for a lifetime been endeavoring to preach. The duty of the white man is to conquer and control, probably for a couple of centuries, all the dark peoples of the world, not for his own good, but for theirs. We all admit that duty within our own narrow lands, and try to perform it towards our own savages, and the extension of our work, if we can extend it over the whole world, cannot but be good. Mr. Kipling sings, as "the white man's burden," seeking no profit beyond fair pay for honest work, shrinking from no accusation except that of wilful oppression, and, above all, expecting no gratitude from those we may help to redeem. Mr. Kipling humbly following the Providence which is clearing the path, and compelling us all, even against our wills, to enter on it, bids us perform it though we do but "reap the old reward, the blame of those we better, the hate of those we guard" The same right which justifies those in a country who are wise enough to see what is gained by order, justice, and lenity in securing those good things even through policemen and soldiers, justifies the wiser races in compelling the less wise races to pursue the only course which can cure them of their deficiencies.¹

The Spectator concluded by declaring that interference to govern well was the chief justification for Imperialism. Even before Kipling's poem was published, this paper had come out emphatically in support of the idea of the poem, the occasion having been a speech by John Morley against jingoism. At that time the Spectator had said that it believed in expansion, ". . . . not for gain, but because we think that in expanding we can find a larger area of duty, can arrest the numbing influence of parochialism, and can give the dark races of mankind their first fair chance of progress."² At the same time the Spectator predicted an early reaction against both jingoistic and the more altruistic Imperialism in England, because the rapacious seizure for gain was discrediting the policy. Harboring this fear, any intelligent man would endorse the sentiment of "The White Man's Burden."

Very soon after the publication of this latest poem,

¹LXXXII (February 11, 1899), 193-94.

²Ibid. (January 21, 1899), p. 77.

Kipling fell ill, and thereafter for a time all was clamor and praise, incoherent and indiscriminate; at no time before or since did he so nearly reach a state in which all adverse opinion lapsed completely as in the spring, summer, and early fall of 1899. He was world news. Arnold Bennett wrote later,

. . . . I remember the personal anxiety which I felt when Kipling lay dangerously ill in New York. For a fortnight Kipling's temperature was the most important news of the day. I remember giving a party with a programme of music, in that fortnight, and I began the proceedings by reading aloud the programme, and at the end of the programme, instead of "God save the Queen," I read "God save Kipling," and everybody cheered.

Christie Murray, in a Sunday Sun of that time, wrote a generous appreciation of Kipling, and closed with a plea to all who read the article to put up at noon that day a prayer that Kipling might live.² Queen Victoria asked to be kept constantly informed of Kipling's condition.³ The Academy wrote:

Mr. Kipling's grave illness has been the event of the week. Nothing else was talked of. 'How is Kipling?' was the first question asked at breakfast tables throughout the country. . . . To find a parallel case it would be necessary to go back to the death of Charles Dickens. This is a very remarkable fact when we remember that Mr. Kipling is a writer of but thirty-three years of age, whose work has ever avoided the sentimental and humanely genial, such as usually endears an author to his readers, but has been notable rather for uncompromising vigor. It seems to indicate that the English people know a strong man when they see one, and are conscious of the tremendous moral force in the hands of this far-sighted student of tendencies.

It is probable that much of the feeling resultant upon the rumors of Mr. Kipling's serious plight--and for a day or two death seemed inevitable--would have been absent had this lamentable illness come two years earlier. Mr. Kipling had not then the place he now holds in English hearts and intellects. His was already the most considerable voice of the younger generation; but his impassioned note of patriotism, although he had often struck it resonantly, had not vibrated through English-speaking lands as it has since done. The beginning of Mr. Kipling's leadership--for he is an Anglo-Saxon leader, say what we may--was the "Recessional." People then for the first time recognized that an eloquent advocate of Imperialism and national rectitude was continually on the watch. From that time there have been in the public mind two Kiplings--Kipling the great story teller, and Kipling, a national stimulus and guide.⁴

¹Books and Persons, pp. 160-61.

²Arthur Rutland, "Rudyard Kipling," Bookman (L), LXXI (October, 1926), 14.

³Time, XXVII (January 27, 1936), 24.

⁴LVI (March 4, 1899), 257.

Two aspects of Kipling's fame are significantly emphasized in this notice--the national concern over his illness, and the date given to the beginning of his special political leadership--the date of "The Recessional." Also important is the assertion that it was his patriotism rather than his literary merit that brought about the extraordinary elevation of his name after 1897.

Of similar tenor was the comment of the Spectator:

. . . . the nation has felt that in Mr. Kipling it would lose a great force in our public life, and a great force for good. His absence must leave us all poorer in respect of what a nation always needs most--an influence which makes for national righteousness, which helps to build up the national character, and makes us think less of the material and petty things of life and more of the great and lasting issues. The country has felt that if it lost Mr. Kipling it lost its chief interpreter--the man who best of all the present generation can make it understand itself, its duties and its high destiny.¹

Kipling was then praised for having interpreted the soldier, India, and the white colonists. In doing the last, he had been of special service in bringing colonial local patriotism to a point where it became the greater patriotism of the Empire.

Again emphasizing the importance of "The Recessional" and of the political aspect was Littell's Living Age:

The 'Recessional' did for Rudyard Kipling's fame what all the gifts of the story teller, all the audacities of the pride of life in prose and verse, would have failed to achieve. It was just that kind of humble petition which has moved the hearts of a headstrong and domineering race since the days of Cromwell.²

Most outspoken of all was W. T. Stead, lavishing eight pages of superlatives in his Review of Reviews under the title, "Mr. Rudyard Kipling: The Banjo-Bard of Empire."

. . . . we can say without hesitation that if all our English poets had lain a-dying, from the Poet-Laureate downwards, their fate would have excited less interest among the English folk, high and low, rich and poor, cultured and uncultured, than that which was felt in Rudyard Kipling's illness. It needed only the threatening shadow of death to reveal the fact. Whatever may be the sneers of the prig, or the scoffings of the superior person, Rudyard Kipling now stands revealed as the man who most of all has impressed the popular mind, fired the popular imagination, interpreted the popular consciousness. Both in prose and verse he has struck "that bard's true lyre, a nation's heart." Other men may be greater poets. Other men may more fully deserve to be hailed as possessors of the divine gift of genius. But no other man has

¹LXXXIII (March 4, 1899), 302.

²"Rudyard Kipling," Littell's Living Age, CCXX (March 25, 1899), 787.

with such unerring precision struck the notes to which the public heart responds most readily. He has become the vates sacer of the last years of the nineteenth century--the Robert Burns of his time. Poet Laureate he may never be by grace of Her Majesty the Queen. But Poet Laureate he is today by virtue of the supreme will and sovereign pleasure of His Majesty King Demos, whose dominions extend over the whole of the territories at present occupied by the British Empire or the American Republic. He has the position if not the title, and reigns by right of eminent domain over a whole world of loyal and devoted subjects.

. . . . he is the prophet of the Imperial idea, of the Imperialism which is based on service rather than on glory, the Imperialism which presents as its credentials the bearing of burdens rather than the extorting of tribute It is a message of duty, the obligation of the strong to help the weak, the latest phrasing of the old-time saying that he who would be greatest must first be the servant of all.

The song of "The White Man's Burden" is the most popular rendering of all that we have been for the last twenty years more or less painfully endeavoring to drive home to the intelligence of our people. For my own part I can well remember how I learnt the truth, years ago, when Kipling was but the mournful, desolate little chap whose tribulations at the hands of Aunt Rosy he has so touchingly described in his story, "Ba, Ba, Black Sheep." Trevelyan's "Competition Wallah," and Sir W. W. Hunter's "Orissa" and "Annals of Rural Bengal" were the books that made vivid to me the open secret of the Roman peace which Britain maintains among the dark-skinned races of the world. That conception of the Empire as service, the service or ministry by the stronger and more advanced nations of the weaker and less progressive nations, has been the basis of all the Imperialism which I have ever preached in good report and ill, beginning it a quarter of a century since, when few would listen, and persisting in it even today, when the true Imperialism is almost submerged by a flood of bastard Jingoism which revels in the splendors and ignores the obligations of Empire. It is the only Imperialism which will not create a passionate recoil in the serious, sober conscience of our people.

. . . . "The White Man's Burden" is famous among the political poems of our time because it passionately but seriously formulates the only true moral basis of Empire. The influence of Kipling in politics is something like that of Carlyle. Both are preachers of the doctrine of the drill sergeant. One worshipped Frederic the Great, the other Sergeant Whatisname. But the stick is the sceptre common to both divinities. Kipling is the antithesis of Swinburne, who belongs to the Revolutionary, pre-Imperialistic era. And as Swinburne, lawless, defiant, liberty-loving carries the note of Revolt so far as to reck little of the reproach of Blasphemy, Kipling on the contrary, while administering unlimited stick to the recruits, bows ever prone before the Infinite Drill Sergeant overhead.

. . . . "Recessional" caught so well because it harmonized so well with sober second thought in Jubilee times.

In this miscellaneous fashion Stead ran on in defense of his hero. He refuted Francis Adams' charge that Kipling was the "sweet psalm-

ist of Jingoism and Adultery," by saying that Kipling believed "in a kind of God," as attested by "The True Romance," "The Hymn before Action," and "The White Man's Burden." Counting the millions of dark-skinned persons under Britain's control, he estimated that every Briton bore on his back seven black or brown or copper-colored men. "Kipling has put the Imperialistic idea on the right basis. Far removed indeed is the Imperialism of 'The Recessional' and 'The White Man's Burden' from the flaunty Jingoism of the Music-Hall." Stead speculated seriously on the occult powers of Kipling, going so far as to wonder how many incarnations he had enjoyed before his birth in Bombay. Then, returning to "The Recessional," he remarked that the poem took well because it caused good serious folk to forgive his former "joyous chronicling of the vices and failings of the men of common clay." In America Kipling received 240 pounds for a short story, another 240 for rights of republication elsewhere, and still another 240 for rights of republication in general--1,000 pounds for a short story! Stead closed his article with excerpts from an interview with Kipling by one Dr. Kellner, who wrote for the Neues Wiener Tageblatt. Kellner found Kipling never so distrustful as when praise was around him. "The annexation of one white nation by another," Kipling was reported as saying, "I regard as the greatest crime that a politician can commit. Don't annex white men." It is not unlikely that Kipling was here using an opportunity to warn Germany against certain designs on colonial territory. Also quoted by Stead was the message of sympathy sent by the German Emperor to Mrs. Kipling when her husband lay ill in New York:

As an enthusiastic admirer of the unrivalled books of your husband, I am most anxious for news about his health. God grant that he may be spared to you and to all who are thankful to him for the soul-stirring way in which he has sung about the deeds of our common race.

Finally Stead quoted a Frenchman, Victor Basch:

The muse of Kipling lives in the courts and purlieus of the barracks. She has her nose purpled with gin; she smokes a pipe, chews tobacco, and is sea-sick. But she has one, ¹incontestable merit . . . the merit of movement and life.

In the latter part of his essay Stead was anything but coherent and pointed, but the very tendency toward rambling and discursiveness shows how eager the journals of the time were to pick up anything that smacked of Kipling. Everything was news that bore on

¹Review of Reviews, XIX (April, 1899), 319-27.

the great name. The rest of the press notices during that spring and summer showed the same tendency. Reporters went into the streets and quizzed tradesmen, policemen, and servants about their Kipling-preferences;¹ the Bookman revived Barrie's essays of a decade before, though Barrie had since been silent.² John Collier's portrait of Kipling received attention, and was widely reproduced in journals, and Heinemann came out with a brochure of twelve portraits, leading off with Victoria, and following with such dignitaries as the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Roberts, the Prince of Wales, and, of course, Rudyard Kipling.³ Kipling phrases abounded in the speech and writing of the hour. McGill University at Montreal bestowed the LL. D. degree soon after Kipling's recovery from illness.⁴ Rumors got abroad of a syndicate to be formed in America to speculate in and control all of Kipling's output, and the Academy published a facetious prospectus:

Kipling (Limited)
Incorporated under the Companies Acts, 1862 to 1898
Capital . . . £1,000,000
Directors
Mr. A. P. Watt (King of Literary Agents) London
Messrs. Romeike & Curtis, Press Cutting Agents,
London
Mr. Doubleday, Publisher, New York
Auditor
Sir Walter Besant
Advertising Agent
Mr. Thomas Atkins
Breaker
Mr. George Moore
Offices, Army and Navy Mansions, Victoria Street⁵

The New Macmillan De Luxe edition of six-shilling volumes began to come out in July. The Publishers' Circular, making announcement of the edition, said:

Mr. Kipling is surely the most fortunate of authors. He is but four-and-thirty, yet his fame is world-wide, and he is the most highly paid writer of the day, if not of the century. Moreover, in spite of his vast popularity, he is treated as a classic alike by critics,⁶ and collectors, and the publishers are equally kind to him.

¹Academy, LVI (March 11, 1899), 305.

²XVI (April, 1899), 5-6.

³Publishers' Circular, LXXI (September 16, 1899), 269.

⁴Academy, LVI (May 13, 1899), 521.

⁵Ibid. (May 27, 1899), pp. 587-88.

⁶LXXI (July 15, 1899), 50.

To regain copyright over the Departmental Ditties, which he had sold in 1889 for apparently less than a hundred pounds, Kipling paid at this time or a little earlier, the sum of twenty-five hundred pounds.¹ The Bookman recalled a speech from as far back as 1894, in which Kipling, speaking at the formal leave-taking of Cormell Price from the headmastership of the United Services College, had praised the master for his aim of training men to make and keep empire.²

About June, 1899, one William James Clarke, using the pseudonym of "G. F. Monkshood," produced a book, Rudyard Kipling. An Attempt at Appreciation. Portrait, and Autograph Letter to the Author. The nature of the book may be guessed from the title, and was aptly summed up by the Saturday Review soon after-- "crudded flattery." Kipling, said Monkshood, had been labelled the English Maupassant: "This is the finest compliment ever paid-- to Maupassant; one-third of whose work is unmitigated filth."³ The judgment of the Saturday Review was eminently just. The "autograph letter to the author," of which the title-page boasted, was a mild disclaimer from Kipling of the praise the book lavished upon him. Instead of climaxing the months of laudation as the author had probably hoped, the book precipitated something of an anticlimax, because of its too obvious flattery. As Kipling in 1897 had cried humility to the dangerous pride of England, so now the Saturday recommended the same commodity to him, taking its occasion from Monkshood's book, and delivering a sobering sermon on the subject of Kipling-worship that represents practically the only inharmonious note in the whole symphony from "The Recessional" until this time. The essay was far from anti-Kipling, but it was profoundly against indiscriminate and disproportionate praise. It began pungently:

After a singularly ill-starred visit to New York, the incidents of which have been brought, even to excess, before the notice of the public, Mr. Rudyard Kipling returns this week to England and to his home. We rejoice to learn that he has recovered his health, and we venture to hope that he will be successful for some time to come in keeping his name and his concerns out of the papers. There has been a little too much about him in the gossiping columns of the lesser press of late for his moral and intellectual health. He has become excessively famous very early in his career, and what he has

¹Ibid. (August 19, 1899), p. 185.

²XVII-XVIII (November, 1899), 37.

³(London: Greening & Co., 1899), p. 47.

now to dread is a popular reaction. Danger for him lies now in the foolish praise of his more illiterate admirers, and no more curious instance of what this class can do in the way of making a fool of a hero can be conceived than a certain volume of crudded flattery by a Mr. Monkshood which is now lying on our table.

Having thus gone to work on Monkshood, the Saturday presently disposed of him by saying that his book was the grossest flattery, lacking discrimination, and representing a plain prostration of the savage before his deity. Then the article had a few words in the gate with the "celebrated youthful genius." Unfortunately, it appeared, the deity (Kipling) appeared to like the adoration of the savage, for there was in the book a preface, in the form of a letter from Kipling, in which the fulsome praise bestowed by Monkshood was quite too faintly disclaimed. Instead of setting his heel on the thing, the poet admitted having read it with a good deal of interest. The Saturday saw no modesty in this admission, especially in view of the "tone of complaisance in Mr. Kipling's recent utterances." So far, on the whole, Kipling had borne himself well, but he ought to beware lest he grow puffed up. He deserved praise, and the Saturday admired him, but over-praise was bad. The language habitually applied to him would be excessive even if applied to Scott or Tennyson or Victor Hugo. Already the author of the Barrack-Room Ballads was raised to a pinnacle of fame higher than that reached by any other author in his lifetime, and there were those who gazed up at the throned and canonized figure with anxiety, fearing he might not be able to resist the temptation to "assume the god, affect to nod, and seem to shake the spheres." No one disputed that in part his immense fame was deserved, since it rested in some measure on his own genius, "the pungency of his style, the closeness and abundance of his observation, his rich and multiform imagination." But these qualities would account for only a quarter of his popularity--the rest was due to circumstances, to the chance conjunction of his particular work with a particular national state of mind--with all that was "utilitarian and materialistic, all that was inimical to thought and favorable to action, all the external rowdiness and latent puritanism with which this century was closing so surprisingly in England." These qualities found an exact echo in Kipling's works. His admirers claimed for their hero that he had set all the current Imperialistic machinery in motion, that "England was lying spellbound, when the majestic genius of Kipling

brooded over the deep, and called forth the forces which ran, throbbing with life, to the extremities of the Seven Seas." Such claims exaggerated the importance of authors; they did not start national movements, but only identified themselves with such movements, and sped them onward. Since so much of Kipling's fame depended on the temper of the moment, it was to be feared that when this moment passed, the fame of Kipling might pass also, for he was "far too deeply scored with the characteristics of his talent to change with changing times." He was now a calculable quantity; the world knew what he would do, and what he could not do. Adaptation to a new climate of national feeling was beyond his power; very soon, perhaps, he would need all the modesty he could muster, if public taste should change; and if he avoided becoming too proud and oracular now, he would have an easier time adjusting himself to an age when he was no longer the national hero.¹

Monkshood's book aroused no stir of applause, but the Saturday's warning was noticed and commented upon. The conclusion was, as the Publishers' Circular expressed it, that, while the warning was justified, there was yet no cause to apprehend that Kipling would succumb to flattery. If taste should change, as the Saturday feared, and relegate Kipling to the limbo of outdated authors, might not Kipling change also? Anyway, the Circular materialistically concluded, whatever happened, Kipling had had his fair share of the good things of authorship.²

After the Saturday's discordant note, whether because of it or not, public clamor abated considerably. July, August, and September were quiet months. Kipling, back from the United States, was recovering strength and writing away at Kim on Andrew Carnegie's Scottish estate, whither his father, Lockwood Kipling, had accompanied him. In the mounting excitement that filled the land as the South African situation moved steadily toward war, Kipling receded from the news front, until the fact of war brought him again to the fore with the poem "The Old Issue," in the Times of September 29. The poem was well enough received to show that Kipling had lost nothing of his hold on the British people. War came too soon to allow reaction from the overpraise of early 1899 to undermine his position. The Spectator said:

¹"The Case of Mr. Kipling," Saturday Review, LXXXVII (June 24, 1899), 776-78.

²LXXI (July 1, 1899), 7.

We have several times dwelt upon the fact that Mr. Kipling performs a great and truly patriotic function as interpreter to the nation. He knows how to show his countrymen in the lightning flash of inspiration the issues that lie at the heart of a great crisis. He has never done so more completely than in his poem, "The Old Issue," published in Friday's "Times." . . . "The Old Issue" is worthy of the writer of "The Recessional,"--a poem which Sir Edward Clarke only on Thursday¹ declared to be the greatest poem written by any living man.

"The Old Issue," however, lacked the fire to kindle excitement, especially in those ten days between it and the declaration of war. Its imagery, its symbolism of the "Old King" (autocracy), were not popular in style, its verse was less simple than that of "The Recessional" or "The White Man's Burden," and the appeal was to a less commonplace ideal than the ideal of piety or religiosity in the former poems.

War began October 11, 1899, and England rushed to the task of sending "fifty thousand men to Table Bay," over well nigh ten thousand miles of ocean. The task was enormous, and without enthusiasm would perhaps have been impossible. That this enthusiasm existed, at least in the autumn of 1899, was demonstrated when the Daily Mail, sponsoring a project to raise money for the wives and reservists who were called out, asked Kipling to write the beggar's litany for the campaign of solicitation. The answer was "The Absent-minded Beggar," published in the Daily Mail October 31, 1899. It was not a literary piece. It was not even, by Kipling's own confession, an attempt at poetry.² It was a slangy, popular appeal, adapted to the music-hall where much of the money was to be collected. It was therefore not a piece upon which the customary critical weapons could be wielded, and the critics said as much. But its popular success, measured by the amount of money it brought into the fund, was immense. Sir Arthur Sullivan agreed to write the music for the poem. When he saw the lines, inspiration left him, and it was days before he ventured forth with the air.³ In the first month, the proceeds were twenty thousand pounds;⁴ at the end of 1901 they were over a hundred thousand pounds,⁵ and by the end of the war they amounted to nearly a quar-

¹Spectator, LXXXVIII (September 30, 1899), 429.

²Something of Myself, p. 162.

³J. B. Booth, Old Pink 'Un Days (London: Grant Richards, Ltd., 1924), pp. 111-12.

⁴Review of Reviews, XX (December, 1899), 555.

⁵Blumenfeld, op. cit., p. 170.

ter of a million pounds, if Kipling's own statement is reliable.¹ Nor did its influence stop at collecting money--it served also to fire national patriotism in the black months of the first autumn, when Ladysmith, Kimberly, and Mafeking were imperilled, and English arms splintered ineffectively against the novel war-front presented by the tactics of the mobile Boer peasant army. "Kipling's 'Absent-minded Beggar,'" wrote Colonel Lionel James after the war, "and our early reverses had fired national patriotism to an extraordinary degree."² As the war dragged on, the poem lost none of its efficiency.

At the same time as "The Absent-minded Beggar," but with a different purpose and appeal, there was appearing in the market Kipling's Stalky & Co, a book which, however much it may sustain Kipling's general philosophy, personal and political, had yet nothing to do with the South African War, portions of it having appeared long before, and all of it having been written before the war scare became acute. Stalky had a surfeit of attention from the critics and from communicative lay readers. The booksellers reported themselves not disappointed in their anticipations as to its sales.³ In spite of a flood of war books of all descriptions, Stalky ranked in England, from October, 1899, to the end of January, 1900, respectively sixth, tenth, fourth, and third among the best sellers. In Scotland it ranked eleventh in October, second in November (the month of the "Absent-minded Beggar's" ascendancy), and thirteenth in December.⁴ The twelve antecedent books were almost all war journalism of one sort or another.

The popular reception was dominantly favorable. The London Quarterly Review, in spite of the flagrantly un-Wesleyan character of Stalky, asserted that "boys will be more manly when they have read this book."⁵ The Athenaeum, always slow and cautious in bestowing praise, said the same thing,⁶ and Blackwoods found it not only a good boy's book, but praised it from almost every point of view also; Dean Farrar (author of Eric, the story

¹Something of Myself, p. 162.

²High Pressure. Being Some Record of Activities in the Service of the Times Newspaper (London: John Murray, 1929), p. 175.

³Bookman (L), XVII (November, 1899), 40.

⁴Ibid., XVII-XXII (Monthly Booksellers' Reports).

⁵XCIII (January, 1900), 184.

⁶October 14, 1899, p. 515.

of the model school boy), said the reviewer, was a historian of prigs.¹ The Spectator emphasized especially the chapter, "The Flag of Our Country," as a "wonderful study in patriotism" for adults as well as for boys,² although a week later a correspondent was given space for a letter replying that the book was beyond the understanding of boys, both in the quality of its humor and in its subtle analysis of character. The correspondent, however, coined the epigram that "we should all of us prefer being caricatured by Mr. Kipling to being canonized by the author of 'Eric.'"³

Against this complimentary response to Stalky must be placed certain other responses, not so favorable, foreboding the critical storms that were now not far off. One of these came from the usually friendly Academy, which found Stalky not boyish, and too clever, and added the significant judgment that Kipling's later productions were not equal to his earlier ones--Stalky was his "least satisfactory book."⁴ This was the first note in what was soon to become a chorus lamenting the decline of Kipling's power. Another came, later, from Arnold Bennett, who dated his cooling toward Kipling from Stalky & Co.⁵ And Henry James wrote, in a somewhat mixed fashion: "I can't swallow his loud, brazen patriotic verse. . . . His talent is great . . . in spite of Stalky."⁶

November, 1899, the last month in the period of "apotheosis" that has been described, drew to an end. Portraits of Kipling abounded in the magazines. According to some booksellers, the war had improved his sales; according to others, it had not, though it had not harmed them.⁷ Editions of his various works did not perceptibly slow up in 1899, not fewer than fifteen separate ones being issued, among which the Barrack-Room Ballads appeared in their seventeenth, and the Departmental Ditties in their eleventh edition.⁸

Thus ended for Rudyard Kipling three years of unclouded triumph, years that had begun in 1897 with a reputation sloping

¹Blackwoods, CLXVI (November, 1899), 703-705.

²October 21, 1899, p. 570.

³LXXXVIII (October 28, 1899), 607.

⁴LVII (October 14, 1899), 421.

⁵Books and Persons, p. 161.

⁶Letters, I, 341.

⁷Publishers' Circular, LXXI (November 11, 1899), 520.

⁸English Catalogue of Books for 1899, LXIII, 118.

steeply upward from The Seven Seas to "The Recessional," mainly on the political impulse, and remaining at the crest with scarcely any intermission through "The White Man's Burden," through dangerous illness, and through "The Absent-minded Beggar," and then perceptibly descending, not precipitately nor very far, but observably, descending from its unique altitude. Kipling's fame was never again to soar so high.

